



# BOARD OF VISITORS

**THE VIRGINIA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF AND THE BLIND**  
**P.O. BOX 2069**  
**STAUNTON, VA 24402-2069**

**Senator Emmett W. Hanger, Jr.**  
**Board Chairman**

**September 23, 2010**

Tour of campus was conducted before the meeting started.

**Call to order** - Chairman Senator Hanger called the meeting to order

Members present: Senator Emmett Hanger, Delegate Dickie Bell, Virgil Cook, Alice Frick, Donna Gateley, Jane McNeil, John Pleasants, H. Diane Sandidge.

Members absent: Delegate Landes, Ralph Shelman.

Seats vacant: Senate representative from eastern Virginia

State staff: John Eisenberg, DOE; Rich Sliwoski, Director of DGS; Samantha Vanterpool-Rucker, OAG; Chinh Vu, DGS; Judy Wyatt, Legislative Aide to Delegate Landes

VSDB staff: Nancy Armstrong, Superintendent; Jack Johnson, Principal; Nate McLamb, Director of Human Resources; Doug Wright, Information Technology; Mary Murray, Director of Student Life; Becky Plesko-Dubois, Clinical Director; Lisa Byrd, Accountant; Rachel Effinger, Interpreter; Rene DeVito, Interpreter; Vivian Jones-Smith, Administrative Assistant

Visitors: Rachel Bavister, President VAD; Wayne Frick, deaf alumni; guest of Diane Sandidge

**Approval of June 10, 2010 Minutes** - Senator Hanger moved to dispense with the reading of the minutes and to accept them as written. Motion was seconded and passed.

**Confirmation of Executive Board members** - The VSDB BOV Executive is comprised of the Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, and two additional members. At the March 2010 meeting Donna Gateley was appointed. One more member is needed. A call for volunteers was put forward by Senator Hanger. Alice Frick put her name forward; a motion to appoint Alice Frick to the executive board was voiced and seconded. Motion was approved.

**Construction update and BOV responsibilities** - Rich Sliwoski was introduced and thanked for his attendance at this BOV meeting. The board appreciates his time and continuing interest in the construction of the VSDB campus. Mr. Sliwoski yielded the floor to Dr. Armstrong. Dr. Armstrong provided some background information on the separation of the VSDB from DOE and the creation of the BOV. In 2009 the VSDB became a state agency separate from the DOE and was placed under the direction of a Board of Visitors. The BOV have a great deal of authority when it comes to governing the VSDB including overseeing personnel contracts, managing personal property and the use of real estate owned by the VSDB. She feels it is her responsibility to bring concerns to and ask guidance from the BOV as well as present information to the board. Dr. Armstrong then presented that as part of the original consolidation plan Price Hall (deaf boys dorm currently in use) was to be torn down to make room for a parking lot. The new education building for middle and high school deaf and blind students has limited parking. The distance from Price Hall to the new education building is considerable and prevents that location from being a viable parking solution for the new education building. Also, as the consolidation project has progressed and changed to accommodate unforeseen challenges it has been proposed that Strader Hall and portions of Healy Hall be rented to industries that complement the mission of the VSDB. Therefore, the current parking between Healy Hall and Strader Hall will be needed by the tenants of those buildings in the future. Attention has once again shifted to the location of Darden Hall as a good location for parking. Darden Hall was vacated 20 years ago due to a decline in student population and even though the building has been maintained in an unoccupied state (i.e. electricity still hot, heated to a small degree and fire systems maintained) the building has deteriorated beyond the point where it would not be economically sound to repair/renovate. In comparison, Price Hall is in current use and in good condition. Dr. Armstrong asks that the board create a site plan for the VSDB and decide which building should be torn down.

Senator Hanger acknowledged Dr. Armstrong is concern and indicated that the board does have the responsibility to insure the best decisions are made for the school. He commented on how the Board of Education, who governed before the BOV, was detached and relied on an advisory board for information on the status of the VSDB. It is difficult to rely on another's views when making important decisions. The board has the responsibility to educate itself, review information, propose a site plan and see it through the review process.

Mr. Sliwoski then took the floor commenting on how hard Dr. Armstrong has been advocating for the VSDB for the last ten years. He commended Chinh Vu, DGS site project manager, on a job well done bringing the current projects in under budget. Mr. Sliwoski concurred with Dr. Armstrong on the dynamic process of meeting ever changing needs during a large construction project. Not only do expectations and needs change, technology changes, creating the dynamic process of tailoring each project to the current needs at hand. The current need at hand for the VSDB is adequate parking for the teaching and support staff that will work in the new education building. Keeping Price Hall and demolishing Darden Hall can be completed under the original budget for the demolition of Price Hall. Also, with the removal of Darden Hall, Main Hall will be open to view from across the sports fields creating an opportunity for the public to enjoy the architecture and beauty of the building.

Several questions were asked at this point about why Price was originally slated for demolition, what it would be used for if kept, could Darden be renovated and used in the future, would there be enough parking for Watts Hall and the new dorm if there is not additional parking in that area, what would the parking look like, what about parking for large events etc?

Mr. Vu, Dr. Armstrong, and Mr. Sliwoski answered the above questions. Part of the original decision to demolish Price Hall was to be in compliance with fire codes between two buildings on state property. With the design of the new dorm and the fire block windows available the VSDB will be in compliance with current state fire codes. Price Hall can be used to house future student teachers as well as parents who live far away and need to attend early IEP meetings for their child. The Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI) used to have office space on campus. With the availability of space in Price Hall they and other agencies could once again be housed on campus. Darden Hall is beyond economic repair. There is currently adequate parking for Price Hall at Price Hall (it is currently being used by construction employees and equipment). Once the renovation of Watts Hall and work on the new dorm are complete there will be ample parking on the north east side of campus for all three buildings. The parking on the south east side of campus is not adequate for the staff and support personnel. If Darden Hall is demolished and after the small playground next to the pool is moved to the new playground site then the parking lot created on that site will be available for the new education building, sports events and events in the auditorium. A parking plan will be designed to keep through traffic from driving in front of the gym, yet keep the fire lane open. Parking will be available in the bus loop for very large activities on an as needed basis.

Senator Hanger mentioned that Darden Hall looks more like the older buildings than either Watts Hall or Price Hall even though it was only built in the 1950's. It would be nice in the future if Watts Hall and Price Hall could have cosmetic changes to the outside to make them more like the rest of campus.

Senator Hanger requested that this issue of demolishing Darden Hall and keeping Price Hall be sent to the executive committee and they will make a recommendation at the next meeting. Motion was seconded and passed.

Mr. Sliwoski showed aerial pictures of campus construction from 4-29-2010 and 8-22-10. Both dorms (deaf boys dorm and blind dorm) will be ready for next school year. The education building will be ready by Oct./Nov. 2011. Peery Hall, Swanson Hall and Watts Hall will be renovated and ready by the end of 2012. Kjellstrom + Lee are doing a great job, keeping on schedule and with- in budget. The heating and AC systems going into the new education building are large enough to supply heating and cooling for future needs of Bass, Main Hall, and the Chapel.

A short slide show was shown of the deterioration of the inside and outside of Darden Hall. Including water damage and old electrical.

**School reports:**

**Personnel** - Human Resource Director, Nathan McLamb  
Mr. McLamb presented the following information:

<b><u>VIRGINIA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF AND BLIND</u></b>			
<b>Faculty and Classified Staff</b>			
<b><u>Department</u></b>	<b><u>Authorized</u></b>	<b><u>Filled</u></b>	<b><u>Percent of Fill</u></b>
Administration	4	4	100%
Clinical and Educ. Support	19	18	95%
Blind	20	18	90%
Deaf	49	41	84%
Residential	46.5	44.5	97%
Student Health Services	5	4	80%
Food Services	7	7	100%
Public Safety	3	2	67%
Human Resources	3	3	100%
Operations	24	23	96%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>180.5</b>	<b>164.5</b>	<b>91%</b>

16 vacancies are planned as part of budget cuts

<b><u>VIRGINIA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF AND BLIND</u></b>			
<b>Wage</b>			
<b><u>Department</u></b>	<b><u>Authorized</u></b>	<b><u>Filled</u></b>	<b><u>Percent of Fill</u></b>
Administration	1	1	100%
Clinical & Educ Support	1	1	100%
Blind	9	8	89%
Deaf	22	19	86%
Residential	14	11	79%
Student Health Services	6	4	67%
Food Services	1	0	0%
Public Safety	13	11	85%
Operations	4	3	75%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>82%</b>

13 vacancies are planned as part of budget cuts

Mrs. Frick asked how many staff in the deaf department are deaf or hard of hearing. Mr. McLamb responded that 37 staff total on campus are deaf or hard of hearing, he would have to research for numbers specific to the deaf department.

Mr. McLamb provided the following information:

*Deaf Department:*

*Number of Teachers (Full-time): 23 (7 of these are DHH = 30%)*  
*Number of Substitute Teachers (Part-time): 5 (3 of these are DHH = 60%)*  
*Number of Teacher Assistants (Full-time): 9 (5 of these are DHH = 56%)*  
*Number of Teacher Assistants (Part-time): 4 (2 of these are DHH = 50%)*  
*Number of Communication Facilitators (Full-time): 3 (1 of these is DHH = 33%)*  
*Number of Bus Assistants (Part-time): 6 (2 of these are DHH = 33%)*  
*Number of Administrative Assistants (Full-time): 1 (Incumbent is DHH = 100%)*

*Total Assigned Staff (Full-time and Part-time): 51 (21 of these are DHH = 41%)*  
*Total Full-time Staff (excluding Interpreters): 36 (14 of these are DHH = 39%)*  
*Total Part-time Staff: 15 (7 of these are DHH = 47%)*

**Budget - Accountant, Lisa Byrd**

Ms. Byrd presented the following information along with an excel spread sheet that breaks down the budget. (Too large to be included in these minutes)

*FY11 BUDGET UPDATE*

*Personal Services as of 8/31/10 are at 22% and should be at 21%*

*Total budget as of 8/31/10 is at 21% and should be at 17%*

*Some reasons for budget overage is –*

- *property insurance for FY11 is generally paid in June 2010 but did not have enough funds*
- *invoice for graduate assistant for FY10 was not received until July 2010*
- *Initial food and cleaning supplies orders*
- *Payouts on retiring employees – while budgeted, the amounts have all been paid out in the first 2 months of the fiscal year*

*VSDB has used approximately 20% of general fund budget as of 8/31/10*

*VSDB has used approximately 12% of nongeneral fund budget as of 8/31/10*

**GRANTS – CURRENT**

*Title I - 7/1/09 - 9/30/11 current balance approx \$145,000*

*Title II - 7/1/09 – 9/30/11 current balance approx \$18,000*

*Title IV - 7/1/09 – 9/30/11 current balance approx \$1,600*

**GRANTS – NOT APPROVED YET**

*Title I - 7/1/10 – 9/30/12 grant amount \$150,000*

*Title II - 7/1/10 – 9/30/12 grant amount \$21,000*

*IDEA Part - 10/1/10 – 9/30/11 grant amount requested \$563,000 (last year's award \$543,000)*

*IDEA Part B Preschool - 10/1/10 – 9/30/11 grant amount \$30,000*

There were no questions from the board. Mr. Eisenburg expressed concern about the IDEA requested amount being larger than the amount granted last year. Ms. Byrd will look into it.

**Proposed Decision Package - Superintendent, Nancy Armstrong**

Dr. Armstrong presented four new proposed decision packages.

1. New furniture for new dorms. Furniture is not included in the cost of construction.
2. Energy cost for new buildings. They are equipped with AC but the budget can not support operating them.
3. VITA cost. The VITA bill increased by 33% (Doug Wright will provide more detail in his presentation)
4. Support of Parent/Infant program. Currently working on MOU's with school divisions to provide services etc. The first will be with Augusta County. Our speech pathologist has passed the four modules to be qualified as an early intervention provider.

Senator Hanger suggested the discussion on proposed decision packages be postponed until after Mr. Wright's presentation.

At this time the meeting is ahead of schedule. It was agreed to move on with the agenda and break for lunch at 12:30.

**Executive Meeting -**

Senator Hanger and Samantha Vanterpool-Rucker recommended that the executive committee work on the Superintendent's job description and evaluation process and report at BOV meeting in December.

Donna Gateley requested that duties from the by-laws (# 4-10) be included in job description.

Motion for the executive committee to meet and report back in December was seconded and passed.

**Public Comment -**

Rachel Bavister, President of the Virginia Association of the Deaf, reports that the VAD has asked the VSDB to become an affiliate of the Association. This will be at no cost to the school. The VAD and the VSDB have much in common including advocating for the best education of young people. She asserted that the VAD feels that funding for the parent/infant program is moving too slow. More deaf children are being lost in the system and early intervention is important. The VAD will be sending letters to the house in reference to this issue.

Senator Hanger agreed with Ms. Bavister that it is a slow process to obtain funding and that the first step, receiving permission to start the program, had to go through without funding attached or it would not have passed. He appreciates the willingness of the VAD to advocate on behalf of the parent/infant program.

John Pleasants would like information on what will be presented to Richmond to take to the blind alumni.

AT the next BOV meeting the board will put together the budget request to be presented to the appropriate committee.

Dr. Armstrong stressed that the parent/infant program is for deaf, blind, and multi-disabled children and help from both alumni would be appreciated.

**Foundation Board - Superintendent, Nancy Armstrong**

Papers have been filed and received by the IRS. The board is small at this point, just six members: Dr. Armstrong, Janice Rankin, Senator Hanger, Marianne Horinko, Paul Walla, and Judge Harrison May. The board will be enlarged as the duties and responsibilities increase. They hope to meet before December, but must wait on the paper work from the IRS.

Senator Hanger asked for recommendations for future board members and hopes to be functioning before the first of the year.

**Technology - Doug Wright**

Mr. Wright reports that the relationship between ITP and VITA is good. The separation of school from COV has gone well. He is the technician for the school domain and Dr. Armstrong and staff are under COV. Last year was the transition and this year is the work to make it all come together.

The cost for IT has gone up by a third, yet there have been no changes in equipment or service. There is a lot of aging equipment on campus and the VSDB is not allowed to install more memory, nor will ITP upgrade the old equipment outside the PC Refresh cycle.

Samantha Vanterpool-Rucker asked if this old equipment was having an impact on the students. Mr. Wright answered in the affirmative. He is currently trying to stretch the VSDB resources to cover the needs of the students. He is replacing 6 year old computers with 4 year old computers. Students are first priority so the teachers/support staff equipment is cut to provide equipment for the students. The dorms have shared computers for the students to use for homework. Each student has 30 minutes on the computer for homework. The average time for the computer to come up is 10 minutes, severely cutting into

study time for the students. The students need to have at the least one generation out from the current computers being offered. New software requires more memory and the old student computers can not keep up.

The VSDB is paying this new increased bill for very old equipment and are not allowed to upgrade. All equipment is now owned by Northrop Grumman and local IT personnel are not allowed to upgrade even if special funding was available. The VSDB can procure specialized equipment like that needed to support the JAWS program in the blind department, but for the day to day equipment, it must all be Northrop Grumman.

Mr. Wright is currently working with VITA to receive a break on the help desk costs. The teachers often have problems that can not wait for a response from Chesterfield, and then wait for a technician to be dispatched to campus. Mr. Wright responds to local "emergency" need. At this time VITA appears in favor of a price reduction in help desk cost only. There will be no reduction for hardware. This agreement is still in the discussion phase and nothing official has been agreed upon.

With the increase of the VITA bill, Mr. Wright has looked for ways to cut costs. The only way is to remove services. He has targeted three servers that are currently billed at \$1,200 per unit per month. The removal of these three servers will max out remaining equipment but will cut the VITA bill by \$3,600 a month. Any future needs will need to be outsourced; VITA is too expensive. For what VITA would charge \$1,200 a month a local vender can provide for approximately \$200.00.

It was explained that VITA charges the same amount for old equipment as new. A new server is billed at \$1,200 a month, while a server several years old is also billed at \$1,200 a month even though the service and capacity are not the same. Also there is no prorating from VITA based on agency size. The Department of Transportation with its much larger IT budget is charged the same per individual equipment as small agencies with a much smaller IT budget.

It has been discovered that some issues with VITA are communication breakdowns, just a process of finding the right person with the knowledge and authority to make decisions. On the other hand, VITA is firm that they own the equipment and it will not be modified/updated.

The VSDB currently has 210 PCs and 12 servers.

Senator Hanger opened the floor for discussion of this issue. Is it possible to sever ties with VITA? It was pointed out VSDB is an educational institution and is the only state school in the Commonwealth of Virginia to fall under VITA regulations. John Pleasants made a motion to request an exemption from VITA, Delegate Bell seconded. A question about whether the cost of buying equipment back from Northrop Grumman would be cost prohibitive was posed. It was pointed out that the equipment was owned by the VSDB before Northrop Grumman took over ownership and the VSDB was not compensated for the loss of property at that time. Therefore, it would not be appropriate to be charged for equipment they owned in the first place. Additionally the current charges from VITA (totaling approximately \$500,000 per year) would be sufficient to refit the School with PCs and servers as a one-time outlay; this does not take into consideration networking costs. Delegate Bell and Senator Hanger were tasked with looking into this and the motion was carried to request an exemption from VITA for the school.

#### **Departmental Reports - Clinical Director, Becky Plesko-DuBois and Principal, Jack Johnson**

The following summaries were presented:

Jack Johnson

*The Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind (VSDB) is unique; not only in the way it is structured, but also in the way it levels the educational playing field for students who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing or Blind/Visually Impaired. For many of us who work at VSDB, we have always known that the longer students are at VSDB, they are generally more successful in passing the high school End-of-Course (EOC) Standards of Learning (SOL) tests. After analyzing five years worth of SOL scores, we have discovered that the data support what we have always known.*

*For example, the 11<sup>th</sup> Grade English Writing SOL test is a difficult barrier test for students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing due to their delayed acquisition of language. In the last five school years, we have had nine students successfully pass the 11<sup>th</sup> Grade English Writing SOL test, whereas 40 were not successful. It was discovered that the nine who passed had enrolled in VSDB for an average of 8.44 years prior to the test compared to 4.67 years for those who didn't pass. Another example is Algebra I. In the past five school years, 49 students who passed enrolled for an average of 4.66 years compared to 3.29 years for the 25 students who did not pass.*

*The analysis of all high school EOC SOL tests consistently showed that students who passed SOL tests averaged 2.12 years longer than those who did not pass and their average SOL scores differed by 83 points. For the 243 passing high school End-of-Course SOL tests, their average SOL score is 430 and the average enrollment length is 5.98 years. For the 343 SOL tests that students did not pass, the average SOL score is 347 and the average enrollment length is 3.86 years. The analysis of all SOL tests across all grade levels and subjects is consistent. It clearly shows that the longer a student who is deaf or hard-of-hearing is enrolled at VSDB, the likelihood of passing SOL tests increases, especially the barrier tests that determine diploma options. The overall pass rate for all high school EOC SOL test for five years is 45.1%.*

*The same analysis of the EOC SOL tests for students, who are blind or visually impaired, is not complete. However, the overall pass rate for all high school EOC SOL test for five years is 68.8%. Last school year, at all grade levels, 100% of all students taking an English test (both reading and writing) received passing scores. The overall pass rate for all SOL tests administered in the Blind department during the school year 2009-2010 is 73.3%. We will continue to analyze the data in the Blind department to determine if there is a correlation of enrollment and SOL pass rate.*

*It would be interesting to know how VSDB compares with the overall Commonwealth of Virginia's pass rate for students who are profoundly deaf and who use American Sign Language as their primary mode of communication and for students with a primary disability of visual impairment. This information would provide us a better picture of how successful VSDB is in meeting the mandates of the No Child Left Behind Act.*

*Last year, the General Assembly passed legislation that allowed VSDB to re-establish a Parent Infant program. The original Parent-Infant program targeted babies identified with having a hearing loss for early intervention services. We are excited to announce that we have decided to expand the program to include babies who are visually impaired and babies who have a dual sensory impairment (deafblind). Currently, we are moving forward with an agreement with Augusta County Public Schools to pay for our services from the funds they receive from Medicaid. We are working with other local school division to establish similar agreements. We envision that the Parent-Infant program at VSDB will be the resource for early intervention that support parents learning about deafness and/or blindness. In order for this program to be fully resourceful, we need to put in place the necessary funding to support its needs.*

## **LUNCH**

Becky Plesko-DuBois

### ***Blind Department***

*Students in the Blind Department take the IOWA Tests of Basic Skills once a year in the late fall. The IOWA scores can be directly compared to the academic achievement of same grade peers without disabilities. Overall, students in the blind department are achieving at relatively high levels.*

*Reading Comprehension scores are available for the past 4 years and show that between 60 and 87 percent of blind department students demonstrated reading comprehension skills that were Average or Above Average for the grade level and as compared to peers without disabilities. The IOWA reading comprehension scores are also examined to determine which students are improving his or her individual reading skills over time. In other words, what is the percentage of students who show growth in reading comprehension over time? One word of caution for the reading comprehension growth is that many of the recent graduates were performing at such high achievement levels they did not have much room to demonstrate growth in the IOWA, which is designed for use in high school. Some blind department students were performing above a high school level in reading and therefore could not show "growth" on the test that only covers reading typically covered in high school curriculum. With that caution in mind, the reading growth is explained next. Growth rates for recent years have been: 2006 to 2007 = 66.6 percent, 2007 to 2008 = 77.7 percent, and 2008 to 2009 = 75 percent.*

*Total Math scores are available for the past 3 years and show that between 68 and 87 percent of students in the blind department demonstrated math skills that were Average or Above Average for the grade level and as compared to peers without disabilities. The Blind department math scores are also examined to determine which students are improving his or her individual math skills over time. Again, some recent graduates were performing above a high school level in math and therefore could not show "growth" on the test that only covers math typically covered in high school curriculum. Growth rates for recent years have been: 2006 to 2007 = 63.2 percent, 2007 to 2008 = 44.4 percent, and 2008 to 2009 = 68.4 percent.*

### ***Deaf Department***

*The Phonological Assessment of Literacy Skills (PALS) is administered to all VSDB students in 1<sup>st</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The PALS is given in the fall, midyear, and spring which allows us to closely capture growth that students make in a specific academic school year. The PALS test is given to 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students in public schools in Virginia. The developers of the*

PALS gave VSDB permission to use the test with deaf students up to 8<sup>th</sup> grade because the test can validly measure instructional reading levels up to the 6<sup>th</sup> grade level. PALS measures many literacy skills, although this summary focuses on the passage reading, or instructional reading level, for students. We can calculate how many students make progress between the fall and spring for each academic year starting with the fall of 2005. Students make progress by either improving how many words they can read correctly in one minute, called reading fluency, or by advancing the level of text they can read for instructional purposes. The percentage of growth rates for 1<sup>st</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade students has been: 2005-06 = 89.6 percent, 2006-07 = 95.3 percent, 2007-08 = 90 percent, 2008-09 = 90.3 percent, and 2009-10 = 78.2 percent.

The Stanford Achievement Test -10<sup>th</sup> Edition/Hearing Impaired Version (SAT-10/HI) is given to all students in the deaf department once a year. When assessing deaf students with the SAT-10, they are first given a screening test to determine what test level they should be given. This frequently results in students taking tests that were originally designed for students in lower grade levels. This is the standard procedure for the SAT-10/HI version because nationally many deaf students are working below grade level. Although this is the appropriate way to work with deaf students, this process means we cannot compare the scores to the performance of peers without disabilities. This test allows us to compare the academic achievement of our students with the deaf and hard of hearing students in the norming sample of the SAT-10/HI and to compare their individual progress over time.

The SAT-10 Reading Comprehension scores have been examined for growth every year starting in 2005. Over time the majority of students have demonstrated growth in reading comprehension skills from one year to the next. The percentages of growth rates across all grade levels have been: 2004 to 2005 = 77.6 percent, 2005 to 2006 = 73.8 percent, 2006 to 2007 = 77.9 percent, 2007 to 2008 = 56.3 percent, and 2008 to 2009 = 62.9 percent.

The SAT-10 Total Math scores have also been examined for growth every year. Again, the majority of VSDB students have shown growth in overall math skills from one year to the next year. The percentages of growth rates across all grade levels have been: 2004 to 2005 = 80.6 percent, 2005 to 2006 = 52.9 percent, 2006 to 2007 = 67.1 percent, 2007 to 2008 = 49.1 percent, and 2008 to 2009 = 69.4 percent.

## **Student Enrollment**

### **New Student Applications**

As of September 16, 2010, there have been 15 new student applications already processed for the 2010-2011 academic year. Of those 15 applications, 12 students have been accepted, 1 withdrew the application related to a family move, and 2 students were not accepted. One student who was accepted did not enroll per the parent preference at this time. Of the 11 new students who were accepted and enrolled, 5 entered the deaf department and 6 entered the blind department. In the deaf department, we added 1 preschool student, 1 elementary student to the self-contained classroom, 1 middle school student, and 2 high school students. In the blind department, we added 1 elementary student, 1 elementary student to the self-contained classroom, 1 middle school student and 3 high school students. The two applications for deaf students were not accepted due to concerns those children needed mental health supports that are not available in our educational setting.

In addition, there are 6 students who are in the middle of the application process. Two student applications will be voted on Wednesday September 22 (one elementary deaf male and one high school blind female). The VSDB evaluation team is scheduling a site visit for 2 other deaf elementary male students in order to better understand the linguistic and behavioral supports these students might need to be successful in a new school setting. There are 2 students scheduled to visit VSDB on Wednesday September 22 for the first step of the application process – one deaf elementary student and one blind elementary student for a possible self-contained classroom. There are also possibly three preschool students interested in making applications, and one additional elementary blind student for a possible self-contained classroom.

When considering applications for the 2010-2011 academic year, the evaluation team has been considering all the needs for the student. As we shared in previous meetings, we continue to meet students with a variety of challenges to future learning. The issues noted for the recent applicants have been significant linguistic delays at older ages, older children without any foundational skills in Braille, Nemeth Code and orientation and mobility instruction, lack of appropriate access to standards of learning assessments, additional disabilities such as Autism that have been missed by professionals in other settings, social emotional needs that go beyond disability specific issues, children with significant histories of abuse and/or neglect, families that speak foreign languages, and children with complicated medical issues. At times, it is difficult for us to identify the additional internal resources needed to address the issues that go beyond classroom support and instruction.

### **Current Student Enrollment**

As of September 16, 2010, there are 111 students enrolled at VSDB and in the parent infant program combined. The parent infant program has one student thus far. The Deaf Department has 15 students in preschool and elementary school, 16 students in middle school, and 43 students in high school. The blind department has 5 students in elementary school, 6



*students in middle school, and 25 students in high school. Students with multiple disabilities are currently being served within the respective departments in a variety of models. A few students are in self-contained programs designed specifically around their individual needs. Other students are placed within the more traditional SOL classrooms with various supports such as one to one communication facilitators for some deafblind students, one to one aides to support behavioral issues, assistive technology, push-in related services, and classroom accommodations. In all cases, these decisions are made by IEP teams that include family input.*

Senator Hanger asked if the changes in how the PALS test is to be administered will affect our students. The new requirement is to go to frustration level before the test is complete. Dr. Plesko responded that it will not impact our students, we are currently testing to the frustration level which is only 5 or 10 minutes longer.

Dr. Plesko pointed out that sometimes lack of measured progress is not from lack of learning, but linked to psychological/social issues.

Mrs. Frick asked why the drop in math scores in 2005. Several reasons can impact test results, being a small school one low result will pull down a percentage, as well as possible problems with the curriculum or the teacher needing additional training in the content. Also, SOL scores can be pulled down by new students to VSDB and are therefore not counted the first year.

Mrs. Frick noticed the blind students have a 100% pass in English SOLs where deaf students do not. She pointed out how language makes a big difference.

#### **Residential - Mary Murray**

Dorm staff have developed a positive point system where the students earn points for good behavior and lose points for rule breaking. At the end of the week the students receive extra privileges based on the points they have earned. In this way positive behavior is encouraged. There is a gold card program for older students. They must earn the card by good behavior and have a form signed by teaching staff, SLO staff; dorm staff etc, indicating the student is in good standing in each area. Once a gold card is earned a high school student, (with parent permission), can go into town on their own, stay up later, (in their room), and get up in the morning on their own, etc. The dorm staff has seen a significant change in many students behavior with the introduction of a positive reward system. The staff is not allowed to use the gold card as a means of controlling the student by threatening to take the gold card away if the student does not comply with a request. However, if the student breaks a rule, falls asleep in class, or misses breakfast due to oversleeping, then the gold card is frozen and the student must re-earn the privilege. Ms. Gateley mentioned that the gold card system is a great motivator for her son.

There are behavior staff available to students at all times. The dorm staff work on independent living skills with the students including coping skills. When a student is disciplined for breaking a rule there are always three staff members needed to suspend a student. If the student is deaf/hard of hearing one of the three staff members is a native ASL user. This way the "punishment" is in proportion to the rule broken and not on a whim of one individual, and the student is able to understand the process. There are grievance procedures posted in all dorms. All incidents are reported on an incident report form with who (staff and student), what happened, where and what action was taken by the staff/behavior team. This report is reviewed by the behavior team and maintained in a file for future reference as a means of checks and balances.

There are several groups available to the students through the dorm behavior team including *Team Voices*, *CAPS* (Child Assault Prevention System), the Challenge Program, and gifted and talented programs.

This year JMU and the Staunton YMCA will be working with students on physical activities.

#### **New Business:**

##### **Review letter/flyer notifying parents in Virginia about services that the VSDB provides:**

A copy of the new flyer was given to each board member for review. Members commented that we need to add that the school is a state school with no cost to the parent. Mr. Eisenberg agreed to look at it also. All comments are due to superintendent's office in two weeks. (Oct 7th).

An electronic copy will be sent to Virgil Cook and John Pleasants.

##### **Master Plan - site plan for the VSDB:**

The master plan will be reviewed by the executive committee and a report will be made at next board meeting.

##### **Legislative request for funding for Parent/Infant program:**

Covered under Proposed Decision Package.

**Legislative request for the VSDB to become a Parent Choice Program:**

Dr. Armstrong will set-up a meeting with DOE to discuss this. A report will be given at the next BOV meeting.

**Date for next meeting:**

Thursday December 16, 2010 Main Hall board room.

Executive Board will set up time and place for first meeting.

**Meeting was adjourned at 2:10 pm.**